

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 10421

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, US, IN  
SUBJECT: VISIT OF DEPUTY SECRETARY: CONVERSATION WITH  
FOREIGN SECRETARY AND PRIME MINISTER'S SECRETARY

SUMMARY: THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY MEHTA AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S SECRETARY, V. SHANKAR, CONCENTRATED LARGELY ON BILATERAL RELATIONS AND SOUTH ASIA. MEHTA SAW NEW GOVERNMENTS IN INDIA AND THE U.S., THE CHANGED VIEWS OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION IN WASHINGTON, AND THE CHANGED INTERNATIONAL SITUATION AS CREATING A NEW STAGE FOR INDO-US RELATIONS. THE DEPUTY SECRETARY NOTED US SATISFACTION AT THE FUNCTIONING OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN INDIA, DESCRIBED PRESIDENT CARTER'S DEEP INTEREST IN INDIA AND AGREED THAT THERE WAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A NEW ERA OF INDO-US RELATIONS. AFTER MEHTA'S LONG DESCRIPTION OF INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS, THE DEPUTY SECRETARY SAID THAT WE LOOKED TO INDIA FOR LEADERSHIP IN THE REGION. SHANKAR CALLED FOR AN END TO THE SUSPICION AND SOMETIMES DELIBERATE MISUNDERSTANDING OF INDIA WHICH HAD EXISTED IN THE PAST AND ASKED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S SINCERITY SHOULD BE ACCEPTED, PARTICULARLY ON AN ISSUE SUCH AS THE NUCLEAR PROBLEM. THE DEPUTY SECRETARY REPLIED THAT WE UNDERSTOOD AND RECOGNIZED SINCERITY.  
END SUMMARY

1. STARTING OUT THE CONVERSATION ON THE SUBJECT OF BILATERAL  
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TIES MEHTA SAID THAT THE US AND INDIA WERE AT A NEW STAGE IN THEIR RELATIONS BOTH BECAUSE THERE WERE NEW GOVERNMENTS IN EACH COUNTRY AND THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION HAD CHANGED. MEHTA DESCRIBED INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY AS "CONTINUITY WITH A CERTAIN FRESHNESS" AND ELABORATED THAT INDIA WAS FREE TO DEVELOP RELATIONS ON THE BASIS OF POSITIVE BENEFIT "NOT CEMENTED BY ANY COMMON HOSTILITY". HE WELCOMED THE FRESH ATTITUDE

OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION TOWARD THE WORLD, SAYING THAT US-INDIAN PROBLEMS OF THE PAST WERE NOT SO MUCH BILATERAL AS CAUSED BY US PERCEPTIONS OF SOUTH ASIA. THIS HAD NOW CHANGED AND INDIA'S OWN PERSPECTIVES HAD CHANGED.

2. REPLYING, THE DEPUTY SECRETARY SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO EVENT MORE SATISFYING TO THE US THAN TO WATCH THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRACY IN INDIA. HE DESCRIBED THE PRESIDENT'S UNUSUAL DEEP INTEREST IN INDIA, NOTING THE LEVEL OF ATTENTION TO INDIA WHICH THIS CAUSED IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH. THE DEPUTY SECRETARY AGREED THAT THERE WAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A NEW ERA OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND INDIA, RELATIONS WHICH CAN BE CONDUCTED WITH RESPECT FOR INDIA'S GENUINE NONALIGNMENT. THE DEPUTY SECRETARY THEN DESCRIBED THE NEW INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES OF PRESIDENT CARTER, EACH BEARING AN IMPORTANT MORAL CONTENT: STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATIONS, LIMITATION OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFER, NON-PROLIFERATION, AND HUMAN RIGHTS. HE ELABORATED THIS THEME IN GREATER DETAIL IN A LATER MEETING WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER (SEPTEL). FINALLY, THE DEPUTY SECRETARY NOTED TWO OTHER IMPORTANT ELEMENTS IN THE ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY: NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD AND SEEKING TO DIMINISH CONTROVERSIES IN TROUBLE SPOTS AROUND THE WORLD, NOTABLY SOUTHERN AFRICA, THE MIDDLEEAST AND PANAMA.

3. MEHTA THEN MADE A LONG PRESENTATION REGARDING INDIA'S  
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APPROACH TO SOUTH ASIAN NEIGHBORS. THE PRIME MINISTER, MEHTA SAID, APPLIED THE SAME SENSE OF MORAL IMPERATIVES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AS IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS AND HE BELIEVED THAT IN ITS RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS INDIA MUST BE UNDERSTANDING AND GENEROUS. MEHTA THEN DESCRIBED SOME OF THE BACKGROUND OF INDIA'S PROBLEMS IN SOUTH ASIA AND THE STEPS WHICH IT HAD TAKEN WITH BANGLADESH, PAKISTAN AND NEPAL TO PUT RELATIONS ON A SOUND BASIS. SHANKAR INTERVENED TO SAY THAT THERE HAD BEEN A QUALITATIVE CHANGE IN INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS. DISTRUST HAD BEEN A LEGACY OF THE HISTORY OF THOSE RELATIONS. THE ADVENT OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT HAD CHANGED THE ATMOSPHERE TO ONE OF TRUST. PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGE HAD BEEN BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE MORAL PURPOSE WHICH HAS MOTIVATED THE PRIME MINISTER.

4. BROADENING HIS FOCUS, SHANKAR SAID THE INDIAN ELECTIONS HAD BROUGHT ABOUT A CONSCIOUSNESS OF SELF-RESPECT AND NATIONAL INTEREST IN INDIA. INDIA WILL SHOW MORE READINESS TO COM-PROMISE WITHIN THIS NEW PSYCHOLOGICAL ATMOSPHERE. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT EVER SINCE THE KASHMIR DISPUTE BROKE OUT THERE HAD BEEN SUSPICION AND SOMETIMES DELIBERATE MISUNDERSTANDING OF INDIA. IT IS TIME, SHANKAR SAID, THAT WE GET OVER THIS.

THE PRIME MINISTER HAS NO MENTAL RESERVATION OF ANY SUBJECT HE DISCUSSES AND HE SHOULD BE TAKEN TO MEAN WHAT HE SAYS. THE U.S. SHOULD ACCEPT HIS SINCERITY PARTICULARLY ON AN ISSUE SUCH AS THE NUCLEAR PROBLEM.

5. THE DEPUTY SECRETARY REPLIED THAT WE UNDERSTOOD AND RECOGNIZED THIS SINCERITY. REFERRING TO PREVIOUS COMMENTS ON SOUTH ASIA, HE SAID THAT WE LOOK TO INDIA FOR LEADERSHIP IN THE REGION AND WE WERE GLAD TO HEAR THAT INDIA HAD SHOWN THE TYPE OF LEADERSHIP AND MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL CAPACITY THAT WE WOULD EXPECT. HE NOTED THAT INDIA AND THE U.S. HAVE A COMMON HERITAGE OF MORALITY AND THIS IS THE STRONG FORCE WHICH MOTIVATES INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.

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6. AS THE MEETING DREW TO A CLOSE, THE DEPUTY SECRETARY BRIEFED THE INDIANS ON OUR OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, NOTING THAT WE MUST PROCEED STEP BY STEP FROM STABILIZATION TO REDUCTION AND ULTIMATE DEMILITARIZATION, IF THEY CAN BE ACHIEVED. FINALLY HE BRIEFLY SURVEYED PROBLEMS IN AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST.  
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